Tattoo Guns 'n' Roses by Basilintime

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Summary:

Richie Tozier owns a tattoo shop with his two best friends in the world, Bev Marsh and Stan Uris. The three of them recently moved to a bigger, more central location and found themselves next to a florist, Eddie Kaspbrak, and Richie was pretty much instantly smitten.

Will Richie continue pining for the florist next door? Will Eddie ever be convinced to let Richie give him a tattoo? Just who is Stan dating? Will the local big shot architect manage to convince Bev there's more to him than some nice buttresses?

1. There wasn't much in this heart of mine

The dulcet tones of *Guns and Roses* were playing over the tattoo shop's speakers as Richie spun lightly in his chair working on the sketch for his next appointment. He was purposefully situated near the front windows (to bring in customers with his charming face, of course) and if it meant that he also could catch glimpses of the florist next door, well, all the better.

"There wasn't much in this heart of mine, but there's a little left and babe you found it…" Richie sung along to the song quietly under his breath as he glanced up when he noted some movement outside. His spinning stopped and he leaned into the back of the chair a little further so he could see who was out on the sidewalk.

Eddie. The florist next door. Richie smiled and waved when Eddie noticed him through the window; Eddie rolled his eyes at him but waved in return before returning to tending to the plants he kept out front of the shop. They'd been business neighbors for a while now since they'd moved their shop from where it had been situated further on the edge of town. The new space had given them more room and a more central location for drawing in customers in what was a relatively small town. Eddie hadn't seemed thrilled to have the Lucky Los Ver's tattoo shop open up next door to him.

"You could just go talk to him; you know? Ask him out even?"

Richie swung his chair around to look at Stan in the other station who was hunched over his most recent customer working on the finishing touches of the lizard tattoo on the guy's shoulder. Richie thought it was some kind of gecko or something but wasn't sure and didn't care enough to ask. He was more focused on the look Stan gave him like he just knew what was going to come out of Richie's mouth would be ridiculous before he'd even said it.

"I do talk to him. I've talked to him a lot. Several times in fact. This morning we even said hello to each other, not that it matters. Not that talking to him matters to me because he's just our next-door business neighbor. Who wears that cute little apron and

those ridiculous gloves and face mask as if he didn't realize he'd be working with *flowers* when he opened up a *flower shop.*"

Richie tossed his sketchbook aside, awkwardly worked at freeing himself from the chair he'd been sitting backwards in. It took a second but once he'd managed to actually extract himself, he looked back at Stanley; found him staring at him as if he was a moron.

"You're very convincing there, Rich." Bev pipped up from further back in the shop where she was removing the freshly sterilized equipment from the autoclave. She leaned to look at him from around the corner, her hair up in a messy bun on the top of her head as she gave him a teasing smile. Why he had decided on the two of them as his partners when he opened the tattoo shop is beyond him at the moment.

It's because they're your best friends.

"If you've got that sketch done, you could go grab us some lunch." Stan changed the subject entirely as he went back to work on his client. He was a repeat customer of Stan's, some kind of biologist who liked the almost life-like nature tattoos he specialized in.

"What am I? Your errand boy?" Richie said as he moved to the front counter to snag a bottle of water from the mini fridge. If it gave him an even better view of Eddie rearranging a few of the colorful pots of succulents he had out front, well…sue him.

"Oh, can we do cheesesteaks from that place down the street? I've been craving them all week." Bev came out from the back of the shop, setting the freshly sealed packs from the autoclave in their spot.

"That sounds great, actually. I'll take a chicken philly. Cheese fries, please."

"And I'd love one of the Italians. No fries but I'd definitely take a coke."

"*No, Richie, you're not our errand boy. You're a respected co-*

owner of the shop. We value you," Richie started speaking over both of them even as he snagged his wallet off the countertop.

"Actually, get me those nacho fries. Extra jalapenos." Bev ignored him as she started to organize her station. She had an appointment in a little over an hour.

"I'd like a diet coke as well, Richie." Stan said in a distracted manner as Richie looked back and forth between the two of them.

"You two are assholes. Fine, I'll go get food but only cause I'm fucking starving as well. While I'm at it, do you want anything?" Richie pointed at Stan's client who was clearly doing his best not to shake with laughter while Stan worked on coloring in the tail section of the lizard-shaped ink.

"I mean, if you're offering…"

"No, no I'm not actually offering. Fuck you. I'll get you some fucking fries but that's it." Richie said as he flipped Bev off as she gave a laugh.

"We love you, Trashmouth." Bev called after him as he pushed the door open.

"Talk to him. You're going to be walking past anyway." Richie just managed to catch Stan's suggestion before the door closed behind him and he felt a flush in his face as he glanced nervously down the sidewalk to make sure Eddie hadn't heard the comment.

Richie didn't see him out front of the shop anymore and he felt a little sting of disappointment as he shoved his wallet in his pocket and started on his way. He kept his steps a bit slower than normal as he passed in front of the shop, took in the sweet honeyed scent that permeated the air. Richie craned his neck to try and see in through the front windows; tried to catch sight of Eddie as he passed.

So, maybe he had a *little* bit of a thing.

Richie walked into something, arms moving out to try and steady himself and the person he'd almost collided with when they'd

come around the corner of the shop. He had an apology already on the tip of his tongue when he looked down to find Eddie scowling at him from over the top of the dust mask. Richie blinked as he watched Eddie pull it down to reveal the rest of his face; Richie's eyes immediately going to his lips.

"Jesus, Rich, watch were you're going."

"Did you want lunch?" Richie winced as the words tumbled out over Eddie's admonishment over his inattention. Well, Richie had been attentive, he had just thought Eddie was back inside already so he hadn't noticed him there.

"What?"

"I mean, I'm going to pick up lunch for everyone. The cheesesteak place down the street. I thought maybe you'd, uh, like something too especially since I know you can't always get away to eat being the only one that runs your shop. Sorry, by the way, didn't mean to run into you. Just kind of hard to see someone of your stature since you blend in so well with the succulents."

Jesus Christ, Richie…

Eddie was staring at him with a familiar expression of annoyance. Richie smiled as he tried to hold in a bit of laughter at that indignation. Maybe not the best way to impress the person you sort of had a thing for but he kind of loved how cute that look was.

"Funny, short jokes. Original content there, jack ass. Given the lame ass joke, I'd say you do owe me lunch. Give me a few moments though and I'll come with you. I need a bit of a break and I don't think I trust you not to trip and dump it all on the ground given recent events." Eddie tugged his pair of garden gloves off his hands as he spoke, lightly smacked Richie on the shoulder with them as he moved to step inside the shop.

Richie stood there staring off down the street in confusion about what had just happened. He glanced back towards the tattoo shop and found Stan, Bev and their regular all staring out at him through the window. Bev gave him enthusiastic thumbs up as Stan

just shook his head and went back to work. Richie could practically hear his contention.

Eddie reappeared without all his normal work gear on. When he wasn't dressed up like he was working in a biohazardous environment, he tended towards jeans and what Richie would typically describe as 'grandpa clothes'. They looked good on him.

"Come on, I can't be gone for long. Let's go." Eddie had locked the door to the florist and moved past Richie on the sidewalk. Richie turned slowly on his heel, able to catch up to him easily with a couple of long strides before he fell in step with Eddie.

"You don't usually close up for lunch."

"Yeah, well, I don't usually have the Loser next door offer to buy me lunch. Besides, it's a bit slow today. I needed the break." Eddie gave a shrug as he paused at a crosswalk to check for any cars that were passing by.

"Flowers got you stressed there, Eds? You don't have a sentient plant in back asking you to feed it, do you?"

"You know I've told you not to call me that. And who knows? Maybe you should come in and check it out when we get back. I can't imagine that even a carnivorous plant would want you in its mouth so you'd be safe either way."

Richie gave a snort of amusement at the comment as they started across the street, the cheesesteak place already in view. It really wasn't that big of a town. He saw the smile flit across Eddie's face, the soft laugh at his own joke. He always seemed caught off guard when he said something funny.

"Well, I can't blame it for that. I mean, eating anything that dresses this spicy would undoubtedly give you indigestion when it clearly is used to bland food." Richie motioned to Eddie's outfit, used it as an excuse to give him another once over because he really did look nice. The red sweater was a favorite of his, not that Richie had favorite items of Eddie's wardrobe.

“I don’t know if spicy really describe the mess you call a wardrobe, Richie.” Eddie gave him a critical look as they reached the restaurant. Richie reached over his head before Eddie could get a hold of the door and opened it for him. They were for a moment a little too close, Eddie having to step back so the door could swing outward and they bumped into each other again. “I’m pretty sure I could have gotten the door.”

“Didn’t want you to risk your delicate disposition. You might wilt.”

“Fuck off.” Richie followed Eddie inside the place and they were immediately greeted with the scent of greasy delicious food. Richie felt his stomach give a grumble as it seemed to suddenly realize just how hungry he really was. The woman behind the counter gave them both a half-hearted smile as they approached.

“Hey, hi, how’s your day been?” Richie beamed at her, flipped that switch inside himself that said to be a people pleaser. Her smile turned a little more genuine as he actually waited for a response rather than barreling right into ordering.

“Oh, not great but I think it’s getting better. What can I get you?”

“Well, I’ve got a bit of a list. First, I need one of your chicken philly’s…” Richie listed off Stan and Bev’s orders first, adding in the fries for Stan’s client before picking out something for himself as well. When he was finally done, he gave Eddie an expectant look. “And, whatever my friend here would like.”

“Oh, uh, how about a veggie delight and a diet coke?” Eddie said as he frowned softly at the menu as if he hadn’t really thought the food aspect of this through. “I, uh, have a coupon too, I think…” Richie watched him with amusement as Eddie dug his wallet out to shift through a few receipts before presenting a ‘free sandwich’ coupon.

“Hey now, I’m supposed to be buying for you and you go and pull out a coupon? Hell no, add some cheese fries to his too. He’s due for another growth spurt here soon and could use the extra

nutrition."

"Oh, fuck you." Eddie said with a huff. Richie gave their cashier another wide smile and a wink as she laughed and added on the last thing of fries. Eddie didn't exactly protest but Richie figured if he didn't want to eat them it would just be a bit more food for him.

"Alright, that will be 27. 50." Richie handed his card over to pay and she doled out the cups for their fountain drinks to them. He handed Eddie his with a smirk and watched him storm off to the drink fountain after snatching it from him. "You're one of the guys who run that tattoo shop down the street, aren't you? Lucky Lovers?"

"I sure am. You thinking about getting some work done?" Richie watched Eddie as he waited for his card and receipt back. He had taken a napkin from the holder and appeared to be wiping down the spout before finally pushing the button to fill his drink.

"I might be. I was kind of thinking of getting a little something…maybe on my chest?" Richie blinked and looked back as the cashier handed his card to him. He gave a nervous little laugh as he shoved his things back into his wallet before picking up the last of the cups so he could get everyone else's drink. "Maybe even get something pierced?"

"Ah, you'd have to, uh, talk with Bev at the shop for that one. Can we, um, have a drink carrier?" Richie fumbled a little but still tried to smile. Tried not to act too adverse to the idea. He sometimes managed to forget that the default assumption was typically straight, which in this town was sometimes a blessing, but never the less managed to throw him off when it dawned on him someone was taking 'friendly' to mean more than it was intended to be.

The cashier gave him a small frown, almost boarding on a pout, as she reached under the counter and handed over the drink carrier to him. Richie smiled again, said thank you and immediately bee-lined to join Eddie at the soda fountain.

Eddie had managed to navigate getting his soda poured and was pressing a lid down on his cup when Richie stepped up besides

him. He let the drink carrier drop on the counter before shoving one of the cups under the ice dispenser.

"You get a date out of that?" Eddie glanced over his shoulder towards the cash register before giving Richie a look that he couldn't quite read. It bordered somewhere between curious and maybe a little disappointed.

"What? Oh, uh…no, not my type. Probably too good for me anyway." Richie gave a nervous little laugh as he shook his head.

"Well, that's a given. Can't imagine it takes much to be too good for you, Tozier." Eddie took a sip of his soda with a wide-eyed look full of sass. Richie flipped him off with a tense smile which was quickly followed by a curse as he failed to stop the soda fountain before it started overflowing the cup. He let go of the button and tried to lift the cup off the ledge without spilling it all over the place.

"Shit." He cursed out loud this time as he tried to put the cup down on the counter. Eddie was suddenly shoving napkins into his hands to try and dry the soda off of them before taking more to sop up the mess he'd just made.

"You sure she's not your type, dude, given she just made you jizzpop all over the counter?"

Richie snorted with laughter, almost spilled the soda all over again as he gave Eddie an incredulous look. He saw a bit of a blush come into Eds cheeks though he was clearly trying to suppress his own laughter.

"What the fuck did you just say?" Richie fought to get the words out between his laughter as he shook some of the soda from his hand at Eddie. Eds gave a bark of complaint as he tried to dodge the flecks of spilled coke, shoving more napkins at him in retaliation before trying to carefully dab the whole two specks off his sweater.

"Don't feel too bad, Rich, I'm sure it happens to the best of us." Eddie patted him on the shoulder in a consolatory manner before stepping around him before he got a chance to respond to that one.

“You’re the one that made me jizzpop, you idiot.” Richie muttered it quietly under his voice as he finished cleaning up the last of the soda and tossed the soaking wet napkins away. He pushed a lid down on the first cup before filling the others more carefully as Eddie lingered near the counter for their food to be brought out.

Heteronormativity was a bitch. Sure, maybe it made it easier to let people think he was straight during most interactions but *Eddie* wasn’t supposed to assume he was straight.

Richie sighed as he got the drinks lined into the carrier and lifted it to go join Eddie at the counter just as their food was brought out in two larger bags. The cashier gave him another smile though a small frown formed on her face as he took one of the bags of food and Eddie took the other.

“Did you have an issue with the drink fountain?” She asked while looking at what seemed to be directly his crotch.

“Don’t worry about that; he just got a little over excited,” Eddie fired it off sounding almost defensive rather than the teasing tone he’d had with Richie at the drink fountain. Richie looked down at himself and realized he had soda all over his pants. He cursed again knowing that wasn’t going to dry before they got back to the shop which meant he wasn’t going to hear the end of this for a while.

The cashier gave them both a bit of a strange look as Eddie turned and started towards the door. Richie gave her another tight smile before following after him, cradling the drink tray carefully in his hands while keeping a grip on the food bag. Richie eyed the napkin dispenser near the door as Eddie got it open and at least had the decency to wait and hold it open for him.

“Hey, could you grab me some extra napkins?”

“Nope.”

Richie walked into the shop after saying an awkward goodbye to Eddie at the door of the flower shop. He could feel that nervous embarrassment in his chest that he hated. He'd not exactly been smooth though. Stan and Bev both looked up at him, the two of them leaned back in their chairs and the only ones apparently still left for the moment.

"What the hell happened to your pants?" Stan gave him a frown as he looked him over and Richie sighed as he walked over to the counter.

"Jizzpop," Richie said as he set the bags of food down with dramatic flair. He was a little more careful with setting down the drink tray, not wanting to end up with another mess on his hands, and started doling out the food as Stan and Bev both gave each other a quick look.

"Do I even want to ask what 'jizzpop' is?" Bev asked as she stood and came over to help him. Stan joined them as well, the three of them crowding around the counter as they sorted out who's was whose.

"Yeah, Rich, I said ask him on a date, not 'let him jizzpop all over you'. Especially when you're grabbing everyone's lunch." Stan gave him a look that was just full of judgement as he took the now empty bag and balled it up to toss into the trash. The words were there, built up in his chest and wanting to spill out. He'd been lucky they hadn't when he was still walking back with Eddie. He was, well…honestly, Eddie had handled it well but Richie still felt like he'd made a fool of himself.

"Eddie isn't the one that jizzpopped on me," he said pointedly as he grabbed the extra box of fries he'd bought for Stan's client. "Where's your guy? I've got his fucking fries."

Stan looked confused for a moment as Richie shook the box at him and then a bit of realization crossed his face. Richie realized that Stan's client must have left, meaning they were now extra fries for whoever could claim them, at the same time that Stan reached to snag the box from him. Richie pulled it up high, tried to keep it out of Stan's reach though that was easier said than done given the fact

he was just about the same height as him.

"You actually bought him fries, Rich? We sort of figured you were joking. Stan finished up and the guy headed out." Bev gave a soft laugh as she lifted up the box with Richie's burger in it to keep it from getting knocked to the floor in their struggle.

"Well then, I guess these cheesy fries are mine. After all, I deserve them for the emotional distress I had to go through to get them." Richie had to put his free hand on Stan's shoulder, pushing him back lightly as he almost managed to get the box from him.

"Emotional distress? What exactly happened while you two were off on your lunch date?" Bev said with a laugh. She reached over the counter and stole the box right out of his hands with ease. She gave them both a look that said there would be no arguing as she popped the lid open and plucked up one of the fries and bit into it with relish.

"I made a fool of myself." Richie huffed as he pulled a stool over to sit down while he ate. Stan flopped down in one beside him, neither of them willing to try and snag the fries back from Bev now that she'd claimed them. Richie kept his eyes on the counter to avoid the looks of concern he knew likely passed between them.

"And that's new how?" Bev gave him a grin as she broke the silence gently and Richie raised a single-finger salute in her direction as he got started on his own food. He glanced back a little self-consciously in the direction of the window but Eddie was obviously inside. Enjoying his food and thinking Richie had made a mess of himself over the cashier.

"And how exactly did that lead to you having…'jizzpop' on your pants?" Stan glanced down at the still damp spot on his pants.

"Please, Stanley, stop saying 'jizzpop'. It's inappropriate." Richie said with a groan as he stabbed a fry into his mouth. The sweet taste of cheese, potato and grease flooded his mouth and part of him felt a little less ridiculous. Just a little. Cause if Eddie could unironically use a term like 'jizzpop' then he had no real room to judge.

"Every other word out of your mouth has been 'jizzpop' since you came in here."

"Yeah, but me saying it is normal. I'm a grown human being; hearing you say it is just weird though. Unsettling." Richie gave an exaggerated shiver as if deeply disturbed as Bev gave a soft laugh.

"We're the same fucking age, Richie."

Richie decided to ignore that protest as he tried once more to dab at the soda on his pants. It was better than it had been but it was definitely taking its sweet time drying out. He probably had a spare pair in the back somewhere. It wasn't exactly the first time he'd spilled something on his clothes while at work.

"Well, basically Eddie thinks I'm straight. So, I'm confirmed no chance with him which is the emotional distress part. Second, I managed to make a complete mess by getting distracted by him being a sasshole while I was trying to fill up the cups at the drink fountain. That's the jizzpop part of it. His word, not mine. He was giving me shit for 'blowing my load' at the thought of the cashier who apparently was flirting with me despite the fact that I said she wasn't my type. By the way, Bev, you may be getting a call from her. She said she was wanting a chest piece and I pointed her in your direction but…that may have just been…"

"Flirting?" Bev batted her eyes at him jokingly.

"Yeah, 'flirting'." Richie made air quotes as he said it.

"Huh…guess jizzpop makes sense in that context as a euphemism for ejaculation…" Richie heard Stan say it almost thoughtfully and narrowed his eyes at him as he swallowed roughly. Stan had the bland look of a man who wasn't intentionally making a point of saying as many uncomfortable words as possible.

"Stanley Uris, what have I said about using the adult words? I don't want to hear that type of language come out of your sweet baby face pretty much ever." Richie tossed a fry at him this time and Stan gave an indignant roll of his eyes as he tried to knock it away.

“Ejaculation is a perfectly appropriate medical term, Richie. Would it make you feel better if I said ‘cum’? Or how about…what was it you used to say in college…’clown pie’? Or maybe ‘flying salty demons’?” Stan gave him that looked that definitely meant that Richie had brought this on himself. Richie didn’t know *how* cause he was totally *innocent* and hadn’t provoked Stan at all but apparently, he deserved to hear this deluge from his best friend’s mouth.

“Jesus, where did you learn such foul language cause I know it wasn’t me. Bev? Did you teach him this?”

“God, no. Okay, I’m going to have to put my foot down. I’m trying to eat and if I hear one more idiotic term for the fact that Richie creamed his jeans, I’m going to lose my appetite.”

“Hey now…” Richie complained as Stan busted out laughing at his indignant response. This time he took aim at Bev as he unwrapped half his straw and then blew the other half in her direction. It managed to smack against her shoulder before fluttering down to the counter top.

“Seriously though, Rich…just cause he mistakenly might think you’re straight, doesn’t mean you don’t still have a chance with him.” Stan had let the laughter die down before he spoke up, voice a bit quieter than before. “I still think you should ask him on that date.”

“I don’t know…maybe.” Richie gave a noncommittal shrug but gave Stan a small smile of appreciation for the encouragement. It was something he hadn’t always had a lot of in his life but Stan and Bev both had always been his constant source of support in simply being himself. Sure, they were both assholes sometimes but they were *his* assholes.

2. Chapter 2

Summary for the Chapter:

> Richie ends up feeling like he's living in a bad Groundhogs day remake as he both manages to make a mess of himself in front of Eddie once again while also getting an invite for another chance to grab lunch with him. Now, if only his wardrobe could manage not to embarrass him.
>
> Meanwhile, Bev's favorite customer comes into the shop for a new tattoo.

Richie felt it was a blessing that the shop opened later in the morning. They could have opened earlier, at times they did if there was an appointment for a tattoo that was going to take most of the day, but the three of them had all agreed that they would routinely start around ten in the morning. This meant that each morning when he finally found his way to the tattoo shop with coffee in hand around ten-thirty, Eddie had already been open for several hours and typically was at the part of his day where he was tending to the plants out front.

Richie glanced up as he walked down the sidewalk now on his way in and spotted him. Apron, gloves but no face mask today; at least not at that moment. Richie took a sip of his coffee, slowing his step a little as he watched Eddie prune off a few leaves that apparently had disappointed him at some point over the course of the night. He had noticed that Eds talked to the plants a few times; it was always quiet but he spoke words of encouragement to them as if they weren't just collections of photosynthesizing chlorophyll.

God, he was fucking cute.

"Morning Spaghetti-head. How's the petal children doing?" He finally picked up his pace again to avoid being caught watching him. Took an unnecessarily long sip of his coffee to hide any sort of blush that may have risen to his cheeks and managed to steam up his glasses as well.

"Morning Pain-in-my-ass. The plants are doing just fine." Eddie quipped back at him without even turning to look at him. Richie had to pretend to choke on his coffee to hide the fact that his head definitely went to a place where he could be a specific type of pain in the ass to Eddie. Less of a pain, more of a-

Richie tripped on an elevated corner of sidewalk that he failed to see with his glasses steamed up from his drink. He managed to catch himself before he fell forward entirely but he spilled coffee on his shirt with a loud curse. Eddie finally turned to look at him and Richie heard his snort of amusement and lifted a single finger in his direction while trying to figure out just what to do about this specific catastrophe.

"Do you ever make it through a single day without making a complete fucking mess?"

"I blame you for this." Richie sighed in frustration as he moved to set his coffee cup down on one of the stands besides a potted plant. Twice. In two day. He'd somehow managed to spill his drinks on himself twice in two days and both times it had been because of Eddie.

"Me? You should pay better attention to where you're going, dumbass. That part of the sidewalk has been like that for months now." Eddie sounded affronted as he watched him, his focus finally on Richie when Richie would have preferred it not be. Not when he'd just made an idiot of himself *again* and possibly ruined one of his favorite shirts. "Honestly, its an improvement."

"Ex-fucking-cuse me?" Richie looked up as Eddie gave him a smirk.

"Your shirt. It's terrible. The coffee is an improvement." Eddie pulled his garden gloves off and crossed his arms as he looked at him.

"My shirt is a fucking work of art. In fact, your mom loved the tiny pineapples on it when it was on her floor last night." Richie huffed as he worked on unbuttoning the shirt, pulling it off so that his undershirt was all that remained. It was wet and coffee stained

too, because of course it was, but it was a little better off. Eddie's silence stretched out between them in response and Richie frowned as he looked up at him while wadding his shirt up in his hands.

Eddie was staring at him, smile deflated as he seemed a bit zoned out of it. Richie wondered if he had said something wrong.

"Earth to Eddie."

"What?" Eddie blinked and seemed to realize he was staring as he turned to set his gloves done next to one of the display bouquets. "My mom's dead asshole."

"What?"

"What?" They stared at each other for a few moments before what Eddie had just said really sunk in and Richie felt his face grow hot with embarrassment and slight mortification this time.

"Shit, dude, really? I'm sorry, it was just supposed to be a joke. I'm, uh…I'm sorry for your loss?" Richie bumbled the words out as Eddie gave a shake of his head and turned away. He glanced back at him for a moment but Richie could tell he'd apparently stepped in it.

"No, she was, uh…anyway, I didn't realize you had so much work done yourself." Eddie grabbed his gloves, seemed to flounder a bit himself as he looked everywhere but at Richie even as he motioned towards Richie's tattoos that ran down his arms. There were a few he'd done himself just to prove that he could but the others were a combination of work. Most came from Bev and Stan from over their years working together; a few were from some different artists' whose work he admired.

"Oh, yeah…honestly, most of me is covered with ink." Richie spoke absently as he recollected his coffee. His only real hope now was an elegant exit, if at all possible, which didn't show much promise given his exit was literally just to walk a few more feet to the shop's door. "Right, so, I'm gonna go. Gotta get to work. Sorry about the…your mom thing."

Eddie waved him off as Richie shifted to move towards the safety of the tattoo shop, made a point of avoiding the raised portion of the sidewalk.

"Hey, um…" Richie paused as he reached the door and heard Eddie call after him. He leaned back to see Eddie peek out from behind one of the plant displays. "I figure since you got lunch yesterday that I can grab it today? Let me know what you want a little later? I mean, you three."

"Uh, yeah…" Richie winced a little, felt like he was sounding a bit like a broken record as he fumbled for the door handle for a second. "Like, you don't have to do that but I'm also not gonna say no to food so…if you want. I'll ask the other two."

"Okay, sounds good. Just come over when you're ready to go grab something."

"Yeah, okay. Um, sorry…about the whole. I'll see you later." Richie found the door handle and pulled it open as if it were a lifeline and he stepped inside hastily as Eddie gave him a wave. He stood there for a few moments, back against the door as he was greeted by the silence inside. Richie said a small prayer of thanks that Stan and Bev apparently weren't in the front of the shop yet. They'd be in the back making sure everything was set up for the day.

The sound of the door opening did summon them though, Stan appearing as Richie stood there with an expectant look that turned into a frown of disapproval as he saw it was just him.

"Should we start being concerned about this new trend, Tozier?" Stan gave him a look and Richie realized he was still standing there half soaked with coffee in his undershirt and probably looking a complete mess. He also realized he was in sight of the windows and that Eddie likely could *also* still see him. He pushed away from the door, heading towards the back to side step around Stan to almost run into Bev instead.

"I tripped and spilled my coffee. Do I still have that extra shirt back here?"

"You keep an extra shirt in the office?" Bev gave him an amused once over as he stepped into the small office marked 'manager' despite the fact that there wasn't a single manager of the place. He pulled open their filing cabinet, searching to see if he could find his bounty.

"I mean, not on purpose. I left it here after that 'Cover up your Valentine' thing we ran." Richie opened a few more of the drawers, feeling a little desperate until he spotted the shirt crinkled in the back of the bottom drawer in a ball. He also remembered distinctly why he had changed and left it here after that day but he didn't exactly have a whole lot of options right then.

"You're not serious, are you?" Stan stared at him as Richie shook the shirt out and cringed. He didn't remember where he'd found it, a thrift shop or something like that, and it had made him laugh at the time. It had been funny 'ha-ha' on that day when he had worn it while covering up the tattoos of jilted lovers. Right then on a random Tuesday in the middle of July it maybe made a little less sense.

"Please tell me you're serious," Bev said with a snort as she looked at the bright pink shirt with candy hearts on the front of it that had such charming phrases as "Eat Ass", "Suck a Dick" and "Sell Drugs" across them.

"It's either this or shirtless." Richie tossed the shirt onto the desk so he could pull off his undershirt. He gave them both an expectant look as he stood there cold and shirtless for a few seconds as if they had a choice. He wasn't going to wander around with his shirt off all day. The last thing he needed was to turn customers off.

"I mean…you are a walking advertisement for the shop with your tats," Bev said thoughtfully.

"I really love the thought of him wearing that shirt though. Kind of hard to mistake him as someone not into dick if he's parading around in that all day." Stan shrugged with a smirk on his face and Bev gave him a light smack on the arm.

"This wasn't supposed to be a difficult choice, asshole. I'm

going to wear the fucking shirt cause like hell I'm going to wander around blinding everyone all day."

Richie snatched the shirt back up and fought his way into it with a huff. He pulled it one straight, tried to ignore the amused expressions on the other two's faces. He looked down at himself and thought it wasn't so terrible. Except…

"Shit."

"What?" Bev's smile faltered a bit as if she wasn't certain if there was an actual serious problem or not. Richie looked up at them both and eyed Stan for a moment.

"Change me shirts."

"What? No!" Stan said, stepping back to put distance between them both.

"Bev…"

"Hell no. You were all gung-ho on wearing that shirt, what's changed?" Bev laughed at the suggestion. He knew she wouldn't do it and he looked back at Stan pleadingly.

"Eddie offered to buy us lunch since I technically covered him yesterday. I'm supposed to go to the flower shop when we're ready to eat. I can't go wearing this fucking shirt. Stan, come on, be a friend. Just switch shirts with me. You like dick too!"

Richie watched as a smile spread across Stan's lips, more of a smirk really, an evil one at that. Stan reached out to pat him on the cheek as he just shook his head before turning around to walk away from the office.

"Stan, I hate you."

"Lunch, two days in a row and you wearing that shirt. This will be good for you, Richie. It really will be," Stan called back at him from somewhere near the front of the shop. Richie squeezed his eyes shut tight in frustration as he worked on accepting his fate. Eddie was going to hate this shirt. Richie hated this shirt. Well, okay,

Richie thought the shirt was hilarious but that was when he'd worn it secure in the knowledge that the hot florist next door wasn't going to see him in the shirt. Not clearly enough to read it. There was a reason he had changed before he left that day.

"You knew he wasn't going to change shirts with you." Bev leaned against the door, giving him another once over as Richie looked down at the shirt as if it was going to magically change for him.

"You wouldn't…by any chance…?"

Bev burst out in laughter and turned to follow after Stan which left Richie standing in the office on his own. He sighed as he smoothed his hands over the shirt, wondered if he could get out of lunch with Eddie without it seeming like he was making excuses. He really wanted to have another chance to go grab lunch with Eddie.

He'd have to suck it up then. Richie wasn't usually one to mind making a fool of himself in front of people, hell, he did that on purpose half the time when he decided to throw his hat in the ring at random open mic nights at comedy clubs. He just had already *made* a fool of himself that morning as it was with the 'your mom' comment and he had an overwhelming suspicion that Eddie wasn't going to find his shirt all that amusing either.

Richie squared his shoulders, decided that if he was going to wear it then he may as well own the shit out of it, and he followed Bev and Stan out to the front of the shop where they were getting their stations set up. It was the middle of the week but all three of them had appointments coming up that they'd need to be ready for.

He took a second to glance out the front window before moving to get his area set as well. There was an older couple outside the flower shop looking at some of the example bouquets in the flower shop window but Eddie was no longer out front tending to the plants. Richie gave a soft sigh, self-consciously smoothed a hand over the shirt once more and got to work.

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Richie was in the middle of putting butterfly on a twenty-something college girl when the door chimed. He knew who it was immediately by both the time of day, the fact that they were expecting Bev's next appointment and by the way that the girl's eyes left him to look in mild awe at their new addition.

Oh, and the way Bev greeted their visitor.

"Ben!"

"Hey Bev." Ben's slight drawl came up sounding fond and entirely more intimate than he likely realized. Richie paused for a moment on the butterfly, leaned back in his chair to find Stan doing the same so they could catch a good look at Ben standing at the counter. Bev was giving him a flirty sort of smile, chin in her hand as they talked quietly for a moment.

"He looks good." Richie mouthed the words to Stan who gave a short roll of his eyes.

"He always does." Stan mouthed back at him before disappearing back behind the half wall to his space to continue his work. Richie glanced towards the counter once more, eyes landing on Ben's back and he gave Bev an eyebrow waggle before sitting up once more.

Bev and Ben had a thing for each other. It wasn't a new thing, not exactly, Ben had clearly started crushing first when he came in for his first tattoo a few years ago. The guy had been somewhat of a legend in town for a while, the big wig architect who flew his own plane to his projects and disappeared for months at a time. Derry was the sort of place where someone like that stood out enough to be talked about but Ben was sweet enough that he was generally liked despite the show of apparent money.

Bev had started crushing by the time Ben came for his third tattoo. They had been sitting, talking quiet and low as Bev worked on the new geometric design on Ben's shoulder when he had something that had made her laugh. And not Bev's polite laugh but something that had made her snort with amusement. It had been all over for the two of them from then on but they seemed to be the only two who

didn't realize that just yet.

"Is that that Hanscom guy?" His client, Sheri, leaned in close to him to whisper it loudly and Richie gave her a soft look of pity.

"It is but I've got to say he's already taken." She gave a huff of disappointment as she settled back in the chair and he got to work again. He heard Bev take Ben back to her area to get working, their talk low and intimate and peppered with laughter.

The butterfly didn't take him long, it was a common enough design, one that Sheri had picked out herself. He was running her card as she leaned against the counter admiring her first tattoo, taking a quick selfie making kissy faces at her phone though he didn't miss the way she kept trying to crane her neck to get a look over the half wall that divided out Bev's space. Richie couldn't blame her, Ben was getting a chest piece done and was currently sitting there shirtless as Bev leaned in close.

"Here ya good, mon cheri. Remember, no soaking that puppy for up to four weeks." Richie handed the receipt to her, pulled her attention away from the distraction so she could sign it for him.

"It's a butterfly...not a puppy." She frowned at him, laughed like he was stupid and signed the receipt before snagging her card back away from him. "Thaaanks. I'll be sure to tell my friends about you."

"Yeah, thanks." Richie said as he picked up the receipt and saw that she'd left no tip. He pursed his lips for a second before pushing the receipt into its slot in the drawer and closing it. He stepped around the counter once more, moving to stand where he could see into both Stan and Bev's areas. Stan was clearly about to finish up as well while Bev had just gotten started on Ben new work of art.

"That's a, uh…nice shirt, Richie." Ben gave him an amused look as he turned his head just enough to look at him.

"Sounds like a fun time, huh?" Richie said mainly to see him

blush. Somehow the guy walked around looking like that while maintaining an innocent air about him. “Say, you’re not using your shirt. Mind if I borrow it?”

“What?”

“Say NO!” Stan shouted it across the walk, talking louder than most people thought he was capable of and Richie flipped him off without looking back.

“Let me borrow your shirt. For just a bit, I’ll give it back. Promise.” Richie gave him a grin as Ben looked between him and Bev for a moment with confusion. Bev, for her part, was shaking her head at him.

“Bad look to show up to a lunch date wearing another man’s shirt, Rich.” Bev said in a chastising tone, reaching to snag Ben’s discarded shirt from where it was sitting for the sole purpose of keeping it away from him. Richie sighed, emphasized the lovely bird he’d been directing at Stan in her direction this time.

“Yeah, showing up in an “Eat Ass” shirt if so much better. Come on. I’ll be back before your tattoo is done.”

“So you admit it’s a date?” Stan spoke up from behind him again, his customer giving a low snicker as Richie closed his eyes in exasperation with them both.

“It’s not a date.”

“If it helps, the shirt actually looks good on you, Rich.” Ben gave him a smile that was entirely too sweet as he served up the compliment. Richie felt the blush rise up in his cheeks as he laughed and shook his head. He saw Ben’s sweet smile turn a little bit mischievous which let him know he knew exactly what he was doing.

“Okay, against my better judgement I’m going to go grab you people food once again. Have fun with your shirtless boyfriend, Bev.” He felt a small sense of accomplishment when he saw her cheeks go a bit pink; tried to think of something to say to get Stan

back as well but came up short. “Stan...fuck you.”

“Fuck you too, Rich.” Stan said it back affectionately as Richie turned, headed towards the door while trying to shake off the last of his nerves.

Richie took a deep breath as he paused outside the door for just a moment before turning to step towards the flower shop. He pulled the door open decidedly, scanned around the place for a second to try and get the lay of the land. He hadn’t actually been inside before and it was a lot more open than he had assumed. There were coolers full of flowers along the walls and a few different racks with more bouquets that could be bought as is along with some empty pots and garden equipment beyond what more florists would have.

It took him a second to spot Eddie, back behind the counter working on a bouquet with his entire get up in place. God, he was fucking cute.

“Hey, Lollipop Guild, you ready to go grab some lunch?” Richie did his best not to regret immediately starting in on the jokes as he saw Eddie stop and look up at him; eyes narrowed over the face mask with apparent annoyance. Richie saw Eddie look him over, eyes landing on the shirt for a few moments as he frowned while reading what was written in the candy hearts. He couldn’t read his expression behind that dust mask, had no idea what sort of thoughts crossed Eddie’s face as he turned to pick up the vase he’d been working with and carried to carefully to one of the fridges.

Richie stood there feeling more and more awkward as Eddie continued not to actually say anything to him as he worked on taking off the garden gloves, the apron and the dust mask. Eddie carefully folded them all into a neat pile on the counter before leaning and snagging his keys off the register and finally stepped around the counter top to walk towards him. Richie saw his eyes flicker down to the shirt a second time and felt his defenses go up, guarding himself for finding out that Eddie wasn’t as nice of a guy as he seemed.

“Just when I didn’t think your fashion sense could get any worse, you bring the ‘Eat Ass’ shirt back. I have to be seen in public

with you, you know that, right?" Eddie gave him a sarcastic looking smile, tapped at Richie's chest as if emphasizing the point.

"Wait, back?" Richie frowned a little, gently swatted Eddie's hand away.

"Yeah, you wore that shit on Valentine's day. I remember cause you kept telling your customers if I was running a 'Two Ex Special' if they had to cover up more than one name. How are so many people stupid enough to keep tattooing names on themselves?" Eddie gave him a frown as he stared at the shirt, seemed to be debating if he really wanted to be seen in public with him while wearing it.

"I didn't think you had even seen me that day. You were so fucking over run with people getting last minute flowers so they could actually get laid that night. And, hey, to be fair there was only one guy...no, wait, two guys that actually needed to get two names covered up. Anyone else was lying to you."

Eddie managed to pull his eyes away from Richie's shirt long enough to give him a deadpan stare before he side stepped around him to head towards the front of the shop.

"Come on, if we're going to grab food we should go. I got a few big orders I've got to get done and, clearly, you need to get back to your side hustle as Willy Wonka's side hoe." There was a weird relief as they fell back into the banter and Richie turned to give an offended gasp as he gladly trailed after Eddie.

"I'll have you know I'm his full-time hoe, thank you very much. His cinnamon stick is all mine."

Notes for the Chapter:

Maybe someday Richie won't manage to spill his drink all over himself in front of Eddie.

As always, thank you for reading and comments are forever appreciated.

Author's Note:

This is purely a project born out of a selfish desire for a more lighthearted project with the Losers. I sincerely hope you enjoy and would love to hear your thoughts. <3